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Dedicatory Sermon.

Ps. 26, 8.

This is a day of great rejoicing for the little flock which has banded together in this part of the city of——to worship God in communion. Assembled in this beautiful little church which they this morning dedicated to the service of the most high God, they have now found a spiritual home which they may call their own and which is truly worthy to be called a habitation of God on earth. You, my happy friends, have accomplished what Peter desired to do at the Transfiguration of the Lord: you have built a spiritual tent in which you, together with the triune God and the prophets of old, according to the inheritance which they have left by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word, can live in constant communion with Him who has promised to be there where two or three are gathered together in His name to worship Him.

It is both meet and right that you rejoice on this festive day. For to-day God has given you grace to show visibly to the children of the world the love which you have for Him, His Word, and for the preaching of the Word. You are to-day, as it were, unveiling another monument to the glory of God in the highest; erecting another triumphal arch, symbolizing the victory of the forces of the King of Jerusalem over the hosts of the tyrant of Babylon; giving another evidence that God's people still inhabit the earth, that they are up and doing and about their Father's business.

It is indeed proper to rejoice in the Lord when we behold how the Lord has opened another door for the entrance of His Word which is able to save them that hear; how He has once more established His church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." God has vested His Word with power that, though it be proclaimed by the voice of weak

man, it has prospered in the thing whereto He sent it. He has opened the hearts of His people to receive with meekness the engrafted Word. He has made their hearts and hands willing to give of their abundance, and also of their poverty, towards the establishment of this Bethel, this house of the Lord. Let us, therefore, on this day of rejoicing, rejoice in the Lord, even as St. Paul admonishes: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say unto you, Rejoice!"

My friends, you look upon your church to-day and say, it is well. True joy, however, is lasting joy. Only then will this church, this thing of beauty, be a joy forever if your present festive joy remains undiminished in times to come. "Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind." Your church will be but a sad memorial in this city if you who have established this church prove unkind, if you grow conspicuous by your absence, if you turn your backs upon your spiritual home, forgetting your fathers' and your God. In order, then, that the joy of the present day and the blessing with which the Lord has graciously visited you on this occasion may abide in your hearts and in this house, it will neither be amiss nor out of place if I drop a few words of admonition into your cup of joy. Let me speak to you of

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD:

- I. *The place where God's honor dwelleth;*
- II. *the place which we should love.*

I.

King David says in our text: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth." David loved the house of the Lord, he loved to be in the tabernacle of the Most High. He had loved the Lord during his prosperous reign and had fought the battles of the Lord against the enemies of God's chosen people. "And it came to pass that, as the king was sitting in his house and the Lord had given him peace round about from all his enemies, the king said unto Nathan, the prophet: Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of the Lord dwelleth within a tent." David had a zeal for the house of the Lord; he could not bear to live in a beautiful palace, while the Lord's residence among His people was a tent. He had a desire to make the place where God might dwell as nearly fitting the presence of the Lord as mortal hands and means could make it. And although God did not permit David to build Him a house, because the king had shed much blood on earth in His sight, David manifested his willingness, his good intention, his love for the Lord and

for His house. This show of love might have been hypocrisy. For nowadays there are many so-called benefactors of the church who rarely set their foot inside a church and who give with no other than selfish, self-laudatory motives. David's love and desire were sincere. This appears from the fact that he instructed his son to accomplish that which the Lord would not permit him to do. Furthermore, the many utterances which we find in the Psalms expressive of the desire of the king after the Lord and for the welfare of His church and people do not permit of the supposition that David was a hypocrite.

This love for the tabernacle which we find in David we meet with in all the godfearing people of the Old Testament. And God manifested His delight in their worship by His own presence in the midst of His people. He dwelt for the love of His people between the cherubim on the ark of the covenant. When Solomon dedicated the temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem the Lord was there in a cloud of smoke which enveloped the whole temple. Into the Holy of Holies the high priest went once a year on the day of atonement and sprinkled with blood the ark before the face of the Lord. In the temple the most important sacrifices were offered up, from its courts smoke and incense rose to the nostrils of God. To the temple all Israel went at least once a year, and all true believers at home and in strange lands prayed with countenances turned towards Jerusalem and the temple, as did Daniel at the court of the king of Persia.

In the temple God's honor dwelt, that honor which He would not give to another, that honor which He would not permit to be defiled. When king Uzziah made bold to burn incense instead of the high priest, he was stricken with leprosy. God's great love also dwelt in the temple. He showed His divine love by accepting the sacrifices of His people, by sending prophets unto them with the message of the Messiah who was to come and be the Lord of the temple. As long as the temple remained undisturbed the children of Israel felt secure; for they knew that God was in their midst. When the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians they were disconsolate, imagining that God had forsaken them and had removed His helping hand from them. Their first care after the return out of captivity was the rebuilding of the temple, which remained until Christ, the Lord of the temple, appeared upon earth.

The Christians of the New Testament no longer make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship God. Jesus said to the woman at Jacob's well near Sichar: "Woman, believe me, the times come when ye shall neither at Jerusalem nor yet on this mount worship God. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship

Him in spirit and in truth." In Jesus, the Savior, we have the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and prophecies. The temple with its cult and sacrifices was type and prefiguration of the Christ who was to come. Jesus appeared to fulfill all righteousness. When He was of the proper age, He was presented to the Lord in the temple. At the age of twelve He went with His parents to the temple and sat at the feet of the scribes, listening to them and asking them questions. During His active ministry He went to the temple regularly every Easter. There was, indeed, nothing to fulfill according to the Law of Moses that Jesus did not fulfill. When He died upon the cross, God Himself gave unto the people of Jerusalem and unto the whole world a sign that the Old Testament worship had come to an end, and that the New Testament worship in spirit and in truth had begun. For when the Savior cried out: "It is finished," the curtain in the temple which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, disclosing to the view of all the innermost part of the temple, into which the high priest only had been permitted to step but once a year.

In the present time of grace the Lord is in His holy temple wherever people, be they ever so few in number, are gathered together to worship Him. For Christ says: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Do not imagine that the house of the Lord must of necessity be a beautiful and awe-inspiring cathedral, a costly edifice representing thousands of dollars. The Lord is not a man that He may be bribed with costly decorations or enticed into a church because it is elaborate in style, has a grand organ and a vested choir. Many people seem to have this idea, especially if we judge them from the manner in which they forsake the assembling of themselves together and visit other churches which are not even of the brotherhood of faith. A Christian's place is preeminently in his own church, occasionally in the other churches of the religious body to which he belongs. A Christian is always out of place and in danger in churches which teach not the truth, the whole truth, and only the truth. God dwells there where His Word and sacraments are found. He is at home in a barn which serves as a meeting-place for His people, as well as in the grandest churches. He dwelt for the love of His people in the catacombs about Rome among the dead during the times of persecution, because His Word was there.

You have built a little house of the Lord which, though rather small and inconspicuous when compared with the many magnificent tabernacles in this land, is nevertheless as well as the great

churches, and with more propriety than most of them, a tabernacle of the Lord and a place where His honor dwelleth. You have entered your spiritual home with the pure and undefiled Word of God and with the sacraments which here will be administered according to the institution of Christ. Where these two things are found in truth and in purity, there the Lord's honor dwelleth. The Lord is here within His holy temple; let all the world be silent before Him and worship Him. He is the Father of His house, ever present among His children with peace and forgiveness, with protection and guidance, with help and succor, with redemption and salvation. Here He decks a table with all the good things which Christ has purchased for us: grace, forgiveness, peace, joy, and hope. Here in His house the Lord, your General and the Captain of your salvation, clothes you in the armor in which you shall stand in battle against the enemies of God and of your souls. Here He girds your loins with truth and encases you in a breastplate of righteousness, and places on your heads the helmet of salvation, placing in your left hand the shield of faith, and in your right the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Thus accoutred you go out to fight the good battles of the Lord. When you return weary and fatigued after the labors of the campaign against the devil and the wicked world, the Lord comforts you with His Word and promise of final victory, refreshes and strengthens you, and revives your drooping spirits by letting you partake of His own Son's body and blood in the Supper, given and shed for you for the remission of sins.

Here in His house the Lord leads you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He admonishes you to be firm in faith, perfect in obedience, sincere in love, instant in prayer, childlike in trust and confidence, unwavering in hope. He warns you against temptations, against the enemies of your souls. Indeed, the Lord has omitted nothing to make the habitation of His house both pleasant and profitable for His children. He gives them the one thing which they need for this life: forgiveness of sins; and He answers all their questions concerning the hereafter by filling their hearts with the hope of the life everlasting.

Behold, with such divine gifts and promises the Lord has entered His house to-day. So will He manifest His presence in your midst, so will He feed, lead, and protect you. Do you believe this? More surely founded than heaven and earth are the words of God. Should He, who is no man that He should lie, say something and not do it? Should He, the eternal Jehovah, the God of truth, promise something and not fulfill it? Verily, God's promises are yea, and in Him are they amen.

II.

Knowing that the Lord dwells in your midst here in His house, you should love the house of the Lord and desire to be in His house as much and as often as possible. David expresses this desire in very beautiful words, saying: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

One evidence, therefore, of your love for your church is your absence from the tents of wickedness. You cannot serve two masters; you cannot be children of God on Sunday and children of the world during the week. You must draw the line and step to one side of it. You must choose between God, His house, forgiveness, salvation, and Belial, the world, brief happiness, perdition. And which person present, having his eternal welfare at heart, will halt between two opinions? Remember, if God be with us, as is the case in this house, who can be against us?

It is impossible to conceive of a Christian who does not love to be in God's presence. As soon as he shuns the church we may be sure that something is wrong, that he is fast losing the love for God, and that the love of the world and of self is taking the place of his better love. When such people are asked why they no longer attend church, they will say: "We can be Christians without going to church." This talk, as a rule, is an evasion, and is employed to veil the true cause of their absence. In truth, they no longer have any use for the Word of God; they are in love with pleasures which present themselves on Sunday; personal comfort is esteemed more highly than spiritual consolation. And even though they read their Bibles at home, they are branded as transgressors by the book which they read. For Christ calls those blessed who hear the Word. He says to His disciples: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." And the apostle admonishes: "Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Christ commanded His disciples: "Preach the Gospel." They were not to preach to stones, empty halls, and bare walls, but to people. Therefore the command: "Preach the Gospel," includes the unexpressed command to all people: "Listen to the preaching of the Gospel." The ministry is not instituted for the ministers' sake primarily, but for the salvation of them that hear. Churches are not so much ornaments as edifices of utility. Furthermore, they who neglect public worship lose its benefits

and blessings: the beautiful services, the combined joy in the Spirit, the union in prayer, the communion with Christ and His Church at the Table of the Lord. Let it be your endeavor to receive and to learn as much in the church as possible from your Lord and Savior.

The fact that you go to church, however, is no full and last proof of your love for the house of the Lord. The Preacher says: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." Your love for your church must center in your love for the Word proclaimed in this church. If you love the Word you will listen attentively, and will not disturb others by your restlessness. If the sermon seems tedious and monotonous, if your hand has a tendency towards the watch-pocket: then, first of all, examine the condition of your hearts, and ask yourselves whether you are not growing tired of hearing God's everlasting truths. Perhaps the preacher is monotonous. Even in that case he is preaching the Word; and this Word may contain a special admonition or comfort for you. If the tedium increases from Sunday to Sunday, a word spoken to the pastor in all kindness will be accepted with good grace and gratifying results. But more often the cause sought for in the distance lies nearer home.

You must also remember that your church has a financial as well as a spiritual side, and that your tree of love must send its roots into your pockets as well as into your hearts. Your love must be practical and as free as it is fervid. In this respect you have made a good beginning. Do not let your love grow cold, but remember that it is a sign of lack of love for God and His house if the members of a church live in unencumbered homes, while the church, provided the members build within their means, rests upon shaky mortgages.

My friends, if you in true sincerity show your love for the house of the Lord with hearts and hands and voices, then the blessings from above will rest upon you. Every succeeding visit to your church will add new strength to your faith and love, and will make you more perfect to enter the Holy of Holies in heaven. May God bless His Bethlehem in this city, and lead its inhabitants, one and all, to Jerusalem on high, for the sake of the Redeemer. Amen.

JNO. H. V.

Installation of Church Officers.

1 TIM. 5, 17.

From these words it appears that in the apostolic churches there were two kinds of elders, such as labored in the Word and doctrine, and such as merely ruled and did not labor in the Word and doctrine. There is but one divinely ordained office in the Church, and that is the Office of the Keys, the peculiar church power which Christ has given to His Church on earth, to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners unto them, and to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent. The chief function of this office is the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. But it involves all the functions that are needed in the Church. Hence all those special offices in a Christian congregation which have been created for the welfare of the Church, aside from the public ministry, are nothing more than parts or sub-offices of the one and only office in the Church, the Office of the Keys. There is no command in the Bible that a congregation must institute any sub-office of the holy ministry. However, the example of the apostolic congregations teaches us that it is not well for one man to attend to everything, but that for the welfare of the congregation it is necessary to leave to the pastor the work in the Word and doctrine, and to select members of the congregation for the other work in the Church. And so, following the example of the apostolic churches, we have elected vestrymen to cooperate with the pastor of the church in church discipline and in the admission of new members, teachers and a school board to attend to the lambs of Christ, trustees to see to the congregation's property, a president and a vice-president to preside at the congregational meetings, a secretary, a treasurer, and other officers.

Now, as several of these officers of the congregation are to be installed to-day, it will be appropriate to point out the vast importance of the duties upon which they have entered, and to speak of the honor due to them. Accordingly, let us consider, with the aid of God's Holy Spirit,

THE DUTY AND THE HONOR OF RULING ELDERS.

- I. *Their duty,*
- II. *their honor.*

I.

When Paul says, "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine,*" he refers, in the latter part of these words, to the called ministers of Christ, to the preachers of the Gospel. These are also called

elders. It is the common appellation of all those who hold an office in the Church, whether they be called pastors, bishops, teachers, or rulers. Only one class of officers is mentioned besides the elders, and that is the deacons who had to administer to the wants of the poor. But the Apostle distinguishes between merely ruling elders and elders that labor in the Word and doctrine, and when we speak of ruling elders we mean those officers in the Church who hold a congregational office aside from the ministry.

And what is the duty of these elders? The Apostle says, They are to rule. But in the original he does not use the word which is used of kings or masters when they are said to rule. He uses a word which means as much as to preside, to lead, to stand at the head. He does not use a word which implies superiority and authority. The elders are not to be masters of the congregation, but servants. One is our Master, even Christ, and we all are brethren. They are not to rule according to rules made by themselves, but in all their transactions they are to be guided by the written Word of God, and their authority—if authority we may call it—goes no farther than delegated to them by the congregation; and the congregation may, at any time, revoke the instructions given to its officers. The elders' duty is to carry out the congregation's instruction to them as laid down in the Constitution and By-laws, or given to them by special resolution. Our Constitution distinctly says, "The congregation may authorize corporations within the congregation to perform certain duties, but, at all times, reserves for itself the right to revoke rights and privileges conferred upon others. Corporations within the congregation are the Vestry and the Board of Trustees, who receive their instructions from the congregation, and from a decision of these corporations a member may, at any time, appeal to the congregation, which is the highest tribunal in the Church." The general duties of the elders may be summed up in this wise: They are to confer together with the pastor and among themselves on the needs of the congregation and supply them, to guard against threatening offenses and check those which prevail, to adjust differences and endeavor to make peace among those who oppose one another, to counsel the erring, to admonish the negligent, and, in general, to promote the glory of God and the welfare of the congregation. Upon the trustees in particular devolves the duty to attend to the congregation's property; upon the school board, the duty to promote the welfare of the school; upon the president, secretary, treasurer, and collector, the duty to manage the congregational meetings, to preserve the records, to take care of the contributions and make the necessary disbursements, and to see that the members are regular in the payment of church dues.

In addition to discipline and admission of members the duty devolves upon the vestry in particular to see that the pure doctrine of the divine Word is proclaimed in the church, and that the holy sacraments are administered in strict conformity with Christ's institution, and that in his life the pastor set a good example for his flock.

What important duties! Surely, the progress, the welfare of a congregation depends, to a great extent, on the ability and faithfulness of its officers. Let the pastor of a church work ever so hard to promote the welfare of the congregation, what is gained if the officers of the church be negligent, do not properly attend to their duties, or work directly against him? How necessary, therefore, that the officers of the church be one heart and one soul with the pastor, that they be his assistants in the great work of the holy ministry, as they should be, that they be filled with zeal to work for the Lord and for His cause, and not shun any trouble or inconvenience that they may serve their divine Master in their calling. When the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem elected seven deacons, the holy apostles advised the congregation to elect men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom; and the same qualifications are required in ruling elders. Now the members of this congregation have placed the confidence in you, my brethren, who have been elected or reelected to office, that they have deemed you both competent and willing to serve and promote the congregation's welfare. May the great Shepherd of His Church, our dear Lord Jesus Christ, grant you His grace, His Spirit and wisdom, that you rule well, or, as the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Romans, "Having ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence."

II.

Of the elders that rule well the Apostle says that they are worthy of double honor. The honor of ruling elders is the subject of the second part of our discourse.

Every elder is worthy of honor. The fact that the whole congregation has chosen him to occupy a prominent place in the church places him in a position of honor among his brethren. The elders themselves should look upon their office as an honor, not as a burden which they feel reluctant to take upon themselves. When the congregation confers an important office on a member, deeming him competent and suitable to fill that position, he should not refuse to accept without cogent reasons, but consider it an honor that the congregation places such confidence in him, and be found willing to serve the church to the best of his ability. He should bear in

mind that Christ Himself acts through His Church, and that it is Christ who appeals to him through the congregation that he should put his hand to the plow and do some of the work in the Lord's vineyard. What an honor that we poor damnable sinners are deemed worthy to be instruments in the hands of God, to be coworkers with God, to aid Him in the establishment of His kingdom upon earth! The Lord could certainly build His Church without our aid. He could send down angels from heaven to do the work for Him. But He does not do that. He confers upon us sinful creatures, both ministers of the Gospel and lay elders, the honor that we be His assistants and work with Him and for Him. O how highly we should value this honor!

But experience teaches that a Christian congregation does not always elect the right man for the right place. An officer of the congregation may be ever so faithful a Christian and yet lack the special qualifications for the office to which he has been elected. He may rule to the best of his ability and yet not rule *well*, not rule to give perfect satisfaction, not rule to the best advantage of the church. Honor is due such a man in spite of his shortcomings as an elder of the church. He should be credited for his sacrifices, his self-denying pains and labors in the Lord's vineyard. But if an officer of the church is found to be just the right man in his place, if he gives perfect satisfaction as to the discharge of his duties, if with fidelity, diligence, impartiality, and great success he accomplishes what is enjoined upon him, in short, if he rules well, as the Apostle says in our text, he is worthy of double honor. To the honor belonging to his office as such is then added the honor of excellence in the discharge of his duties. All the members of the congregation should bestow honor upon such an able and faithful officer, appreciate his services for them, encourage him, and thank God for the gifts and talents of their fellow Christian.

Let us hold those men in esteem, then, who, after being chosen by the congregation, were found willing to sacrifice their time and labor for the Church without compensation or reward. Let us pray for them that the Lord may enlighten them with His Holy Spirit to rule well so that the congregation may prosper and flourish both inwardly, as to true faith and Christian life, and outwardly, as to additional membership. And may the great Shepherd of His Church, our dear Lord Jesus Christ, who came into this world to seek and to save that which was lost, who suffered and died on the cross and gained for us all eternal life, bless the work of His servants upon earth and finally receive them and us all into the Church above, the triumphant Church, "the Church of the firstborn which are written in heaven," where we shall praise Him forever. Amen. H. S.

Outlines for Sermons on the Gospel-Lessons.

Sunday Quasimodogeniti.

JOHN 20, 19—31.

Ours is an age of research and inquiry. Man's investigations have been pushed far into the realm of matter and into the domain of mind, and these efforts have not been barren of success. The advances in the mechanical arts and the enriching and systematizing of our knowledge of the workings of nature are due to this spirit of indefatigable investigation.—However, it is to be regretted that the zeal in this direction is often allowed to run riot and to degenerate into a spirit of destruction, finding its utmost delight in an insane endeavor to demolish all that has been handed down by tradition, and intruding itself into domains which it should approach only with the utmost caution and even reverence.—True, the Bible fears no sober investigation, and all the researches of men, properly directed, serve to intrench it more firmly in its claim of reaching the Truth. It is the unreasonable and misguided zeal for investigation that denies the supernatural which is productive of that skepticism which is fashionable in our day, and is even preached from so-called Christian pulpits.—Our text contains a warning against skepticism and we shall treat the theme:

A WARNING AGAINST SKEPTICISM.

I.

The word skepticism did not originally have the meaning that now attaches to it, but it is now used to express doubt and disbelief in the truths of divine revelation. In this sense we are using it now.

a. Such skepticism is censurable. The Savior chides Thomas' "unbelieving," v. 27. This term is one of the greatest opprobrium in the New Testament where men are divided into believers and unbelievers. *α.* Thomas did not believe the words of the Savior spoken before His death regarding His resurrection. *β.* Thomas did not believe the message sent through the angels and by the Lord Himself to the disciples. *γ.* Thomas did not believe the testimony of the disciples, though there was no reasonable ground for doubting it. *δ.* Thomas thus defeated the Savior's very purpose in foretelling His resurrection and in sending the glad tidings of the fulfillment of His words.

b. Skepticism discredits the Bible, God's revelation. *α.* The Bible purports to be the all-sufficient revelation of God's will. It has proved its claim by the mighty power it has exerted and still exerts in individual hearts and in the world at large. Also by the fulfill-

ment of prophecies. To bring proofs that the Bible is the Word of God is much like proving that the sun shines. In this connection we should not forget that false religions owe their spread to features that are congenial to the flesh, *e. g.*, Mohammedanism, all forms of Phariseeism, etc. β . It defeats God's very purpose in giving us this Record and Revelation, v. 31. γ . It casts aside, most unreasonably, the testimony: α . of the holy writers; β . of the untold myriads that have experienced the truth of the Christian faith.

II.

Skepticism is fatal.

a. As long as Thomas was skeptical, he was "faithless," v. 27, unbelieving; did not know His Lord and His God, v. 28. Suppose he had died in that state!

b. V. 31. Those who refuse to believe have not life. This Christ is revealed in the Word, and He acknowledged and used also the Old Testament, so that believing in Him means believing in the Word.

The Lord may use extraordinary means sometimes to remove doubt, as in the case of Thomas. But ordinarily we are to look to the Word alone, v. 31, and believing thus we are blessed, v. 29b.

G. A. R.

Sunday Misericordias Domini.

JOHN 10, 11—16.

"*I am the good Shepherd,*" says Jesus. — "One of the most beautiful, tender, and impressive pictures contained in the Scripture is that of the Oriental shepherd, surrounded by his flock, feeding in security beneath his guardian care amid the green pastures, or peacefully resting beside the still waters. Under those sultry Eastern skies it was a symbol of highest happiness." In the East the shepherd is, perhaps, better acquainted with and more devoted to his sheep than in other countries. He watches them day and night. Shepherds "were abiding in the field and keeping watch over their flock by night," when Christ was born. (See SIECK, *Gospel Sermons*, Part I, p. 185.)

In the ancient prophecies the Savior Jesus is presented to us under many beautiful images: "Sun of Righteousness," Mal. 4, 2; "Branch of the Lord beautiful and glorious," Is. 4, 2; "Rod of Jesse," Is. 11, 1. — He is represented as the Rock of Ages in whose clefts and shadows oppressed and weary man might have shelter and salvation. But we search in vain for a more peaceful and touching picture of Him than that which He Himself appropriated, when He said, "*I am the good Shepherd.*"

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP.

I. *The good Shepherd.*

a. His person. Christ means to say more than that He is a shepherd in the ordinary sense, or that in many respects His work is like the work of a shepherd, and that He is faithful in His Shepherd's work. "I am *the* good Shepherd." The article is significant. He is the promised Shepherd, who is none other than the Messiah, Ps. 23. 80. Is. 40, 11. Ezek. 34, 23. Zech. 11, 16. — How little did the Jews consider these prophecies that their Messiah was to be a shepherd. They pictured Him to their minds as a great worldly king who should wrench the government from the hands of the Romans, but not as a peaceful shepherd. Our great Shepherd is the Son of God whose coming into the world had been promised beforehand. He is God and man in one person.

b. His work. *α.* He has redeemed the fallen human race. He did not only risk His life for the sheep, as a good shepherd will do, but He actually gave His life for them. Hirelings, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees were, take no vital interest in the immortal souls that are entrusted to their care, v. 12. 13, but Christ has done more than an earthly shepherd will do. He has died for us that we might live. *β.* He provides a pasture for His sheep that they might not perish in the wilderness of this world, v. 14. 15. He knows them, that is, He acknowledges them for His own and tenderly provides and cares for them, leading, guiding, protecting, comforting them with the Gospel until they reach the heavenly fold.

II. *His sheep.*

a. Their characteristic. "I am known of mine," v. 14. They know their Shepherd's voice, know that they belong to Him, know what He has done for them, know that they are nowhere safe without Him. They follow Him whithersoever He leads them, and return to the fold when they have strayed away and their good Shepherd has found them again, John 10, 27. His sheep are the true believers, they who trust in Christ alone in life and death and abide by His Word.

b. Two classes of His sheep, v. 16: Jews and Gentiles. Christ's prediction is that in the New Testament the Jews shall no longer hold a distinguished position among the nations of the earth, but that all shall be merged into one great fold, or flock, under the guidance of the good Shepherd. Has not Christ's promise been literally fulfilled? Has not the Christian Church been formed, from the very beginning, of Jews and Gentiles? Is not the good work still going on? Let us pay no attention to those who wait for the millennium. It is a wild dream. There is one fold and one Shepherd now. Let us make sure that we be in the fold and remain faithful to our good Shepherd until death.

H. S.

Sermon-Outline on Rom. 1, 16.

There was a period in St. Paul's life when he was not only ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but was one of its most virulent persecutors. At that time he haled to prison all he could find who called on the name of Jesus. He was not ashamed to consent to the death of the first martyr, nor did he blush to witness that horrid deed. But see what a complete reverse of character was effected in Paul by the converting grace of God—what a mighty moral revolution in all his thoughts, words, and deeds. The recollection of his former errors and cruel prejudices covers him with confusion; and in the review of them he blushes with shame. But no longer was he ashamed of Christ and of His Gospel.

ST. PAUL'S NOBLE AVOWAL.

I. *The nature of St. Paul's noble avowal.*

a. St. Paul is not ashamed of the *Gospel*. The Gospel is good news, the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. It was thus announced by the angel who proclaimed the Savior's glorious advent: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." The Gospel announces light for those who are in darkness, pardon for the guilty, mercy for the miserable, liberty for the bound, salvation for the lost, and life for the dead, John 3, 16.

b. St. Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel of *Christ*. The Gospel of Christ, inasmuch as α . Christ is its author; it is divine; it is from heaven. Those who first published this good news of Christ were most careful to inform their hearers that they had received from the Lord that which they had declared unto the people. Christ signed the Gospel with His own hand, sealed it with His own seal, and authenticated His signature and His seal with signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will. β . Christ is its substance. The Gospel is the good news concerning Christ. It treats concerning Christ's person, redeeming works, resurrection, His kingdom and glory. Christ is and must be all in all. γ . Christ is the end of the Gospel. As the star of Bethlehem conducted the wise men of the East to the very spot where the Savior was, so every truth in the Gospel is intended to act the part of that star.

c. St. Paul is *not ashamed* of the Gospel of Christ. α . By whom is this spoken? Is it the language of a man whose early prepossessions were all in favor of the Gospel? The very reverse of this was the fact. (History of Saul of Tarsus.) He boldly avows: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."—Or is it the language of some individual with a good and warm heart indeed, but with a very weak head, having but a slender understanding—a man who can examine nothing, but is ready to believe anything and everything in its turn? We know that just the contrary to this is the

fact. β . To whom was this noble avowal made? To some rude and remote tribe of uncivilized men? to people without any kind of cultivation, who were utterly unable to inquire into that concerning which Paul avows that he is not ashamed? This proposition was addressed to the inhabitants of Rome. γ . What is implied in this noble avowal? Here is a sort of implication — as if some enemies of Jesus had challenged Paul's courage by saying that he would not dare to show his face at Rome, as an advocate of the Gospel of the despised Nazarene. There he will change his voice and theme. There he will blush to talk about the cross of Christ. Ah! says Paul, I will, on the contrary, let everyone know, when I get to Rome, that I am ready to preach the Gospel of Christ even at Rome, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. I will take my stand side by side with sages and scholars, and will let them know that the Gospel is something of infinitely more importance than they ever conceived. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why?

II. *The ground of St. Paul's noble avowal.*

St. Paul says: "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Here is a good ground and reason. Four important things are to be noticed.

a. *The divine power, energy* of the Gospel. It is not only and merely a powerful means in God's hands, but in itself a divine energy. Observe the universal and powerful opposition with which the Gospel had to and still must contend. At Paul's time and ours. The feeble (humanly speaking) instruments. The twelve apostles. The ministers in our days. What the Gospel had to do. Convert souls. The extent of its triumphs. Is. 55, 10. 11. The Gospel is the power of God. (Illustrate!)

b. *The saving efficacy* of the Gospel. The salvation of the Gospel is a salvation from sin and all its penal consequences. But the Gospel not only announces this salvation in all its length, and breadth, and fullness, and glory, but it also is the powerful instrument, the power of God unto salvation. It offers salvation, and, at the same time, enables to take it, 1 Pet. 1, 5. Whenever and wherever the Gospel is preached God is active in the divine work of saving those who are lost. (*Theol. Quart.*, Vol. VI, p. 47.)

c. *The mode* by means of which salvation is obtained. "To everyone that *believeth*." Mark here, it is not said, To everyone that readeth — to everyone that heareth — to everyone that knoweth — that performs good works, but, "To everyone that believeth." "Believeth with the heart unto righteousness," Rom. 10, 10. John 3, 16.

d. *The extent and impartiality* of this blessing of salvation. "To everyone that believeth." To everyone, without respect to social condition, whether rich or poor. To everyone, without respect to color or clime: souls have no discriminating hues. To everyone, without regard to language or tongue, Rev. 14, 6.

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